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Security Council

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Letter dated 24 October 2013 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 24 October 2013 from the representative to the United Nations of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council in advance of the briefing of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, scheduled for the morning of 25 October 2013.

(*Signed*) Gérard **Araud**

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Annex to the letter dated 24 October 2013 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, I have the honour to refer to the Security Council briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to be held on 25 October 2013, on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Under international law, States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that the basic needs of affected populations are met during armed conflict. Article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention makes it clear that all States are required to "allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores" intended only for civilians and "the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics ..." In addition, article 70 (2) of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention further requires that States undergoing conflict allow for rapid and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments of essential foodstuffs, equipment and personnel.

For the past 31 months, the Syrian regime has persistently ignored its obligations under international law and arbitrarily denied humanitarian access to Syria's vulnerable populations. Instead it has increased their suffering through the use of aerial bombardments, heavy artillery, ballistic munitions and cluster munitions, and chemical weapons have been deployed by Syrian armed forces and its *Shabbiha* militias. Regime forces have laid siege to population centres, denying the delivery of essential humanitarian aid and inflicting unnecessary hardships on innocent civilians.

Earlier this week, the people of Moadamiyeh, thousands of whom remain trapped inside the city, issued an urgent appeal to the members of the international community, requesting immediate assistance and support to end their suffering. Reports have indicated that thousands in Moadamiyeh are forced to subsist on trees and inedible plants, while nearly 1,800 have been wounded and lack access to medical care.

As a result of the regime's campaign of violence and ongoing restrictions on the provision of humanitarian aid, millions of Syrians lack access to basic services, including water, food and medicine. Furthermore, 40 per cent of all Syrian hospitals are completely out of service, and therefore unable to provide basic care for the millions of Syrians affected by violence, hunger and disease. As a consequence, as reported by the World Health Organization, diseases long thought to have been eradicated, like polio, now risk reappearing.

Despite the grave and worsening humanitarian catastrophe, the Assad regime continues to prevent medical care and humanitarian aid from reaching cities and towns across the country. On 2 October 2013, in recognition of the serious situation, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2013/15) demanding that the Syrian regime take immediate steps to facilitate the expansion of humanitarian relief operations and end its policy of laying siege to opposition-held areas.

As the Coalition has already communicated to individual members of the United Nations in its letter of 10 October 2013, the Syrian Coalition strongly supports the content and the implementation of the presidential statement. We also welcome recent statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs calling for humanitarian agencies to be given immediate and unhindered access to evacuate the remaining civilians in Moadamiyeh and deliver life-saving treatment and supplies. The regime must now heed these calls. The international community must also not forget that thousands of Syrians remain trapped in Nubil, Zahra, old Aleppo, old Homs and Hassakeh.

The Syrian Coalition and the Free Syrian Army are committed to ensuring unhindered access for humanitarian aid providers throughout the liberated territories of Syrian under our control. We call on all parties to the conflict to protect the lives of innocent civilians, and we pledge to do everything in our power to ensure that those in need are provided access to medical care, food and water in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law.

The Security Council must now intensify its efforts to ensure that S/PRST/2013/15 is respected and fully implemented. The international community must apply concerted pressure on the Syrian regime to remove basic impediments that prevent the provision of aid that can stop the suffering of the people of Syria and provide immediate relief to the 7 million Syrians in urgent need of care.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition
to the United Nations